INTED 2014

8TH INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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INTED2014 Proceedings
8th International Technology, Education and Development Conference
March 10th-12th, 2014 — Valencia, Spain

Edited by
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IATED Academy

WELCOME INTRODUCTION

Dear INTED2014 participants,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this 8th edition of INTED.

We live in a constantly changing society where innovation, technology and education are the key to the world's development. For this reason, INTED2014 intends to welcome educational experts from all corners of the world under a common aim: to generate thought-provoking ideas for innovative education and to promote international partnerships.

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ETHNICIZATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

At the base of national development is an advancement in education; specifically university education. The Nigerian case reveals that the system of education is at the mercy of state's internal intricacies. The issue of ethnicity, which has fuelled distrust, suspicion and competition among the ethnic groups has resulted in the introduction of certain resolutions such as quota system, federal character, revenue allocation, rotation, zoning, etc. which have further exacerbated the issue; normalizing and legalizing ethnicity. The destructive effects of ethnicity have trickled down to education, and national development remains at the receiving end. In fact, it reflects in the county's public university admission process, appointment of university dons, and even in the location of university facilities: culminating in the deprivation of university education for qualified applicants, displacement of frustrated students and brilliant academics abroad, and the eventual loss of those that could assist in national development to more inclusive societies of the world. As one of the world's most pluralised society, Nigeria becomes the preferred case for the study. A descriptive-analytical approach is applied, while the data are basically collected from texts, institutional records and academic journals. Findings indicate that merit is sacrificed at the altar of national integrity and political accommodation.

Keywords: ethnicization, Nigeria, national development, quota system, federal character.

1 INTRODUCTION

University education is the bedrock of national development and provides a platform of social mobility for folks. Little wonder there has been a continuous struggle between and among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria to utilize its gains for development ahead of the others. This particularly reflects in an educational imbalance between the northern and southern parts of the country. As a result, government since independence have been preoccupied with the need to conjure policies to ensure peace and stability. Among these policies are the quota system and federal character.

This paper, therefore, examines the ethnicization of university education in Nigeria. Also, it criticises the twin policies (quota system and federal character) by investigating their impact on Nigeria's university education system.

2 CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

2.1 Ethnicity

According to Chafe (1994) the primary requirement for debating a thing is to first understand the actual thing being talked about. This position underscores the need for exhaustive analysis of terms. The first concept that is discussed in this paper is ethnicity. To start with, ethnicity as a concept is derived from Greek word "ethnikos", the adjective of ethnos which simply means "a people or nation" (Cashmore, 1992: 97). For analytical purposes, it is essential to examine ethnic group as a concept before defining ethnicity. Some scholars believe that everyone is a product of an ethnic group "in the same way that every ant belongs to an ant nest and every bee to a hive, so every human being belongs to an ethnic group" (Mare, 1993: 26). Despite considerable attention devoted to the subject, opinions are divided as regards its precise meaning. Gbadeyan (1981; cited in Joshua, 2007) sees it as a collection of human beings who are related by descent from common ancestors. To Thompson (1980: 127), ethnic group is a collectivity having real or putative common ancestry, memories of shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements as the epitome of their 'peoplehood'. Cashmore (1992) perceived it not as a mere aggregate of people nor a sector of a population, but a self-conscious collection of people united or closely related by shared experiences. In his own view, Nnoli (1978) defined ethnic groups as social formation distinguished by the communal character of

their boundaries. The relevant communal character according to him could be culture, language or both.

Ethnicity as a concept refers to the corpus or relationships among people from different ethnic groups who decided to base their relationships on these differences (Osaghae, 1994; cited in Vaaseh, 2013). Ethnicity also denotes a contextual discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols (Otite, 1989: 2). Which is why Egwu (1998) asserts that ethnicity is derived from interactions among members of different ethnic groups.

Suberu (1996;z. cited in Uhunmwuangho and Epelle, 2011) contends that ethnicity hardly exists in pure forms. It is a consequence of ethnic group identity mobilization and politicization especially in a competitive ethnically plural environment or context. This is similar to the line of thoughts of Nnoli (1989; cited in Egwu, 1999: 56), that there are four major attributes of ethnicity. First it exists in a polity in which there is a variety of ethnic groups. Second, it is characterised by exclusiveness which is manifested in inter-ethnic discrimination. Third, conflict is inherent particularly in situations of strong competition over limited resources.

From the above analysis it is clear that ethnicity can blight relationship among people of different ethnic background. It is therefore not a surprise that Vaaseh (2013) argued that ethnicity is an unfriendly, parochial, spiteful and resentful attitude towards a particular person or harm done to someone else because he or she is of another ethnic group.

2.2 National Development

Nwaorgu, and Ihedioha (2007) postulates that the concept of development defies universally acceptable definition, comprehension and elucidation. Little wonder that Henry (1977) avers that the word development delineates a vast area but does not specify what play is been enacted. Todaro (1980: 96; cited in Joshua, et al. 2012: 164) sees development as "a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty". McLean (1993: 137-138; cited in Nwaorgu and Ihedioha) defined development in a broad sense as a multidimensional process that normally connotes change from a less to a more desirable state. He further stated that it is the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for the realization of the potential of human personality, which translates into reductions in poverty, inequality and unemployment. Development has also been characterised more simply as the increasing satisfaction of basic needs such as food.

National development according to the Principal and CEO of Temasek Polytehnic, Singapore, comes with it the implications of valued and positive changes that bring about a better quality of life for the population as a whole. Concomitant with this notion are economic and social development. Thus, development is related to increasing the efficiency of the production system of a nation (whether it be processes, goods or services), meeting the basic needs and satisfaction of the population, reducing poverty, creating employment and creating equality of opportunities and increasing the welfare of all social groups are embraced within the concept of national development (Saliu, 2006).

The above submission presupposes that national development is a multi-dimensional process that encapsulates economic, social and political systems of a country. It is important to note that development seems to be inexorably linked with education. Saliu (2006) argues that the focus on education as a tool for national development is essentially a post-World War II phenomenon. This is the case because British historians have noted that in the early stage of industrialization in England (1780-1850) education was never seen to be related to economic advancement as the level of knowledge and skills required for early factories were about the same as that of a successful farmer. But more recent, history tells a different story. After World War II, Japan embarked on formal education programme with emphasis on education as a key to economic growth. The amazing success recorded by the Japanese brought wide conviction that there is a direct link between education and economic development.

The perspective of the Liberal school of thought basically sees development as economic growth, thus, representing the dominant bourgeois thinking of 1950s. This is described as eradication of poverty without proper detailing of how this can be achieved (Nwaorgu and Ihedioha, 2007).

However, there is a radical school, which has adopted the Marxist perspective. Scholars of this persuasion view development as a multi-dimensional and consequently put man at the centrepiece of development action, scheme and programme. The human angle and dimension given to development in preference to institution has received wide acceptance among the third world countries. This is

premised on extreme poverty and disease that have devalued the quality of life in these societies (Nwaorgu and Ihedioha, 2007). Howard (2004: 43) argues that development takes place only when the central problems of poverty, unemployment and inequalities in a society have reduced from high levels. It is necessary to state that the objective of development is to extend the frontier of human lives. This approach is what is adopted in this paper as university education is human centred. Saliu (2006) contends that in developing countries, education plays a crucial role in inculcating in them essential work habits and discipline, equipping their people with basic literacy and fundamental skills, as well as the bedrock of technological knowledge. And that the development of human resources is now widely accepted as a strategic tool for socio-economic development, particularly in promoting industrialization and technological upgrading.

Since education, most especially university or better still higher education is critical to bringing about human development which will obviously translate to national development, unequal access to education most especially at higher level on the pretext of ethnic background or on the guise of bringing about balanced ethnic ratio is a cog in the wheel of national development.

3 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In many parts of the world, education plays an important role in national development. There are significant literatures that have been developed to support this argument of education being a major catalyst or driver of development (NIU, 2005: 3; Ojiambo, 2009: 133-149; Addo, 2010: 85; Debeauvais, 1981; Orobosa, 2010; Dienye, 2011). The importance of education to national development can explain why nations of the world have embarked on investing on it and exploring the world of knowledge in various aspects of human life like science, technology, industrialization, self-sufficiency in food, standards of living and well-being, the environment, healthcare system, good governance, and economics among others hoping that the knowledge discovered will bring about corresponding human advancement and societal development (Orji and Maekae, 2013; Dienye, 2011; Thomson, 2008). In other words, education can be said to be the life wire of a nation and the key lever of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2012). There are various roles education performs in making national development become reality.

First, education performs socio-economic roles through the process of socialization and acculturation. This means that education is an agent of socialization that helps in inculcating relevant societal virtues and values like sound human values, ideals of brotherhood, religious and moral beliefs into the citizens. It shapes both personal and collective identities that promote social participation. Through education, better citizenship is promoted in that, the citizens will be responsible to themselves, others and their nation, and also respect the human right of others despite cultural diversity (Addo, 2010: 85; UNESCO, 2012: 4; Oghuvbu, 2007: 19). Education reduces social vices and creates conducive environment and conditions for achieving the collective development goals.

Second, education addresses the challenges of social inequality and reduces social stratification in the society. According to Ojiambo (2009: 133-149), educational development will bring about advancement like economic growth, redistribution of wealth and income and increase of equality of opportunities, availability of skilled human power, political stability, control of population growth, enhancement of life span, reduction of crime rates and insecurity security and improvement of national cohesion.

Education also plays a major role in national development through the discovery, understanding and addressing societal problems through involvement in research. Centres of education are centres of research. Most tertiary institutions undertake research and facilitate knowledge that improve the quality of life, decisions and also enrich policies (Sirleaf, 2012: 2; Oghuvbu, 2007: 21; Thomson, 2008). Apart from making provisions for laboratory researches, educational institutions also organise public lectures, academic conferences, where seasoned academics are gathered to discuss societal issues with the ultimate aim of proffering solutions to them.

It is essential to mention also as Thomson (2008) opined that development is not a phase to be attained rather it is a continuous process of improvement that occurs with research and development (R&D) playing a salient role in ensuring that individuals that are the agents of change, communities, the institutions and structures that support the agents of change and being moulded over time. Continuous research encourages the discovery of gaps, problems and areas where the society needs to improve on and also proffer solutions for the development of the society. Developed countries understand the essence of research institutes and centres and continue to invest significantly into

education (Cordoba and Ripoll, 2007: 1). The Asian Tigers have recorded noticeable gains from investing in education, as a result of their clear understanding of its pivotal effect on the actualisation of their dreams and aspirations (Dienye, 2011: 15).

Education also helps in solving the leadership questions that a number of countries face today. At the helm of national development is a leader. The common ground in many literatures on education and national development is that via education, socially responsible individuals that can lead their nation towards development would be raised. Education is about raising the quality of life and empowerment via development of skills and acquisition of relevant knowledge (Faure 1972; cited in Thomson, 2008). Education therefore, will teach individuals to make season decisions for themselves and the world around them, choose good leaders, oppose and fight ineffective ones for the good of their country. Oyedepo (2011; cited in Dienye, 2011: 18) supported this by saying that quality education brings right leadership. When the challenges of choosing good leaders are overcome, then it will be right to say that development is in view.

According to the observation of Addo (2010: 83), the human capital theory shows that investment in education has high socioeconomic gains for a country. It is a platform on which personnel are trained and in turn drive development. Dienye (2011: 18) observed that when a society is intellectually bankrupt it will automatically become socially, economically and politically bankrupt, which invariably means no development. In other words, quality education is fundamental to societal development. It stresses the fact that a nation develops in tandem with its advancement in education (Orji and Maekae, 2013). Consequently, this means that development can only be driven by competent people, who have the necessary skills; adequate capacity to create and adapt knowledge with the technology needed to transform and advance the society (Dienye, 2011: 18; Orobosa, 2010; Cohn, 1978; Cavalevu, 2014; Ojiambo, 2009: 133-149).

It is the rise in the productivity of the individual that increases the total output of the economy. In addition, education increases the numbers of educated citizens a country has within her boundaries, making available enough hands to drive development and realize national socioeconomic plans (Addo, 2010: 83; Sirleaf, 2012; Thomson, 2008). This remains the most salient role of education in a society as education first develops the individual who then develop the society; they are the medium through which education can bring about development. It is for this reason that education must be consolidated in response to the manpower needs of the country (Orobosa, 2010).

In other words, education that brings about development is that which has a targeted aim and addresses the need of the society. To ensure societal development in Nigeria, long term investment in education should be pursued to confront the multifaceted challenges of the Nigerian state.

4 HISTORICITY OF ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA

Ethnicity is the cultural characteristic that connects a particular group of people to each other (Duruji, 2008). Ethnic groups are "human groups which cherish a belief in their common origins such that it provides a basis for the creation of a community" (Mbaku, et al. 2001: 61). When we talk about ethnicity, attention is centered on a set of beliefs that are not necessarily biological traits (race) or objective group characteristics (religion, language). However, ethnicity can be seen as referring to differences in language, religion, colour, ancestry and culture among groups to which social meanings are attributed and around which identity and group formation occur (Nagel, 1995: 443).

Ethnicity can result from choice or ascription. An individual chooses to be identified with a recognized ethnic group, or membership in a certain ethnic group can be imposed on an individual by the greater society (Barth, 1969). By implication, individuals can choose their ethnicity, but the choice must be acceptable to society. As such, ethnicity is a combination of individual choice and social imposition (Mbaku, 2001, Davies, 1991, Harris, 1964). From this we can infer that ethnicity is not a permanent trait, but dynamic, which implies that the boundary of an ethnic group as a social category can change (Barth, 1969).

The Nigerian state is one where ethnic diversity has defined the tone of politics (Nnoli, 2008). About 250 ethnic groups and 400 linguistic groups are indigenous to Nigeria (Aluko, 2007). The action of the colonialists to merge these disparate groups and cultures into one political entity, created the problem of nation building for the post-independent administrations (Asia, 2001). The administrative style of the colonialists compounded the problem by its encouragement of identity and ethnic division as a strategy for entrenching their foothold in the country. For instance, the colonial policy of indirect rule localised politics and prevented cross-cultural political interaction among the Nigerian groups, thus

making suspicion the hallmark of inter-ethnic relations (Ekeh, 1996). This was not helped by the nature of the colonial economy, which supplanted the self-sufficing subsistence economy and created the condition of competition for the limited job opportunities offered by the modernisation process along ethnic lines. This state of affairs engendered the emergence of communal associations as a social security fodder for the rising number of migrants who flooded the urban centers for succour (Nnoli, 2008).

These communal organisations would later become the springboard for political parties, including two of the major pre-independent parties: the Northern People's Congress (NPC), which evolved from 'Jamiyyar Mutanem Arewa', a cultural organisation dominated by the Hausa-Fulani people in 1949, and the Action Group (AG), which evolved from 'Egbe Omo Oduduwa', a cultural organisation of the Yoruba ethnic group in 1951. The emergence of these parties increased ethnic consciousness and turned the politics of decolonisation into contests for ethnic superiority. It was the rivalry and bickering between these ethnically based political parties that led to the demise of the first republic following the military coup d'état in January 1966. That intervention of the military polarised the institution along ethnic lines, as a section of the military interpreted the action of their colleagues as ethnically motivated. This created the condition for a counter coup six months later that degenerated into a civil war between the former eastern region and the rest of the country.

The civil war has been interpreted variously, both as a war of unity and an act of persecution, depending on what side of the divide the analysis belongs. One analysis sees the Biafran secessionist movement as a fight for justice, which was aborted by the superior might of the federal military government supported by foreign powers whose interests were to secure a managed condition for economic exploitation in Africa (Amadiume, 2000). The remote causes of the war could be traced to events that occurred with the five years preceding the war. Some of these events included the intense political uprisings and violence that erupted across the country. Fearon and Laitin (2006) recorded 124 of such instigated riots. Most of the victims of the riots were Igbo people living in the northern parts of the country where the killings were more pronounced and coordinated. The attacks were prompted by the fear of Igbo domination, especially after Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and four other majors of Igbo extraction staged a coup in which prominent northern political leaders were killed. The policies of General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo who took over the reins of power, especially the promulgation of Decree 34 that attempted to abolish Nigerian federalism in place of a unitary system, heightened the fear of the North. The counter coup in July 1966 that ushered in General Yakubu Gowon as the head of state turned the table in favour of the north and triggered further attacks against the Igbo in the north. Onu (2001) estimates that about 30,000 easterners were killed in the north and another 1.8 million were forced back to the east as refugees in 1967. The failures of the central government to either stop the pogrom or bring the perpetrators to justice sparked off reprisal killings in the east, and the justification of the decision of the region to secede from the federation. The declaration of the former eastern region as the Republic of Biafra was premised on the argument that the Nigerian state could not guarantee the security of the Igbo and other easterners. This was aggravated by the over-stretching of the then eastern regional government capacity to handle the massive influx of refugees displaced from other parts of the country by the pogrom and the inability of the federal military government to stop the attacks.

Guided by events of the immediate post-independent experience, military administrators who dominated governance attempted to consolidate nation building on the bequeathed legacies of colonialism by stifling political mobilisation along ethnic lines. To achieve this, they introduced principles that combine elements of federalism and consociationalism as a panacea for Nigeria's unity. Some of these actions included the creation of states from the four it inherited in 1966 to thirty-six when Nigeria transited to democracy in 1999. The rationale was to weaken the federating units so as to prevent the re-occurrence of Biafra. The military also incorporated the principle of federal character in the Nigerian constitution recognising ethnic and regional affiliation as the basis of appointments, recruitment, and promotions in federal institutions and agencies. This principle sacrifices merit and does not promote conditions for hard work and patriotism in public service (Oyovbaire, 1983; Suberu, 2001).

The implementation of this policy has by no means achieved the intended unity of the country, but instead worsened the structural imbalance of the Nigerian federation, activating latent centrifugal forces in places where it was hitherto dormant and adding strain on the polity (Mustapha, 2007). This has been reflected in the many ethno-religious riots and communal clashes that washed over the entire country under the fourth democratic dispensation (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005; Ploughshares, 2004). The consequence of this inter-ethnic strife is deepening mistrust among the Nigerian ethnic

groups and weakening of governmental institutions (Aluko, 2007). These factors made the Nigerian space boisterous for ethnic rivalry, abuse of human rights, mistrust of government, corruption, unemployment, and pervasive poverty, all of which feed on deep frustrations, creating divisiveness and promoting violent attitudes that have given rise to a new form of ethno-nationalism manifesting in Nigeria since the late 1990s (Duruji, 2008).

The root of ethnic consciousness as has been noted in several studies was laid by Nigeria's colonial experience. The British colonial style of administration in Nigeria emphasizes the cultural distinctions of the disparate kinship groupings as the center of political organization, thus providing a limited space for inter-ethnic interaction in the 1950's.

For instance, the doctrine of indirect rule restricted administrative action within each locality and made inter-ethnic political interactions difficult (Ekeh, 1996). Thus, ethnic groups emerged from the colonial experience as the most stable unit of political action in Nigeria, as its intensive development was encouraged rather than an evolution of nationwide political tradition.

This was what reflected in the politics of decolonization in Nigeria, which was turned into a theatre of war by the dominant ethnic groups to control the soul of Nigeria and replace the colonialists. The quest for dominance and hegemony of the state has been the hallmark of Nigeria's politics, with each group struggling to gain prominence and ultimately determining the allocation and distribution of resources.

Another issue arising from mistrust among the Nigerian group centers on the problem of settler-indigene dichotomy. This of course has its root in the administrative style of British colonialism. In the first instance, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in January 1914 was purely an imposition without any iota of consultation of the Nigerian people and their leaders (Duruji, 2010). The promulgation of the Native Authority Ordinance and the policy of indirect rule for many decades localised politics, making no room for inter-ethnic and cultural interactions among the Nigerian peoples. Consequently, the environment for Nigerians of different ethnic and cultural groups to meet and understand themselves was not provided; as seen in the run up to independence, there was widespread suspicion among the Nigerian groups. This led to the formation of political parties as champions and projectors of ethnic interests. More so, the policy of the British colonialists to keep Nigerians of diverse ethnic and cultural groups aside and separated from one another helped to compound the problem (Uzoigwe, 1996). For instance southern non-Muslim migrants to the northern part of the country were kept in quarters called 'sabongeri'. The same can be said of northerners that migrated to the south, the pattern of settlement which have endured till the present sees them converging and concentrating in a particular area such as 'Ama Awusa' in Owerri, Gariki in Enugu, Agege in Lagos etcetera.

This foundation culminated in creating the problem of citizenship in Nigeria resulting in the discriminations and exclusion meted out to people on the basis of ethnic, regional, religious and gender identities. This is because those who see themselves are "natives" or "indigenes" exclude those considered as "strangers" from the enjoyment of certain rights and benefits that they ought to enjoy as Nigerians upon the fulfillment of certain civic duties, such as the payment of tax (Bamidele and Ikubaje, 2004: 65). The 1979 Constitution from which the 1999 Constitution was modified has been seen as laying the basis or foundation for the indigeneship problems. This is because it expressly provides that in order to enjoy access to positions and opportunities on the basis of "federal character" one needs to be an "indigene" of the state or local government concerned. Being an indigene involves showing evidence of belonging, through one's parents or grandparents to a community indigenous to a State or Local Government, which in effect suggests the membership of a local ethnic and linguistic community. Thus, the inability to prove such membership of a group of people will result in being defined as a "stranger" who cannot enjoy all the rights and privileges of indigenes and/or natives (Bamidele and Ikubaje, 2004: 76).

This development has been linked to the Nigerian 'national question', which Jimoh (2001) have remarked, relates to how a state made up of diverse nations, ethnic groups or peoples should order relations among its constituent parts. Adejumobi argues that the crisis of the Nigerian state and the consequent problem of peaceful co-existence lie in this question which is two - dimensional (Adejumobi, 2002). The first dimension, he identified as inter-group relations, that is the tension and contradictions that arise from inter-group relations on issues of marginalisation, domination, inequality, fairness and justice among ethnic groups, and is re-inforced by the second dimension, the exacerbation of class inequalities and antagonism in society dichotomized as rich and poor, the affluent and the underclass. As such the main issue on the national question revolves around how to

structure the Nigerian federation in order to accommodate groups in a way that can guarantee access to power and equitable distribution of resources (Oseghae, 1998). This is because the perceived domination of some ethnic groups by others is rooted on the structural nature of the Nigerian federation and the heavy lopsidedness in centre-state relations (Adejumobi, 2002).

5   NIGERIA AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Throughout its history, the heterogeneity of the Nigerian state has more often than not, been a major impediment to national development. Since the conquest of hitherto independent territories and the eventual amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by British Colonialists in 1914, Nigeria's multi-ethnic nature has always culminated in competitions among its numerous ethnic groups. This competitive ethnicity has immensely contributed to the developments in the nation-state; be it in political, social and economic. Unfortunately, education, which is meant to be the base for national development, is also badly hit by this scourge, as the various ethnic groups fight for its heart, so as to advance above the others for progress and development. However, in an attempt to dismiss this sense of disunity and promote a sense of equality in the country, policies such as quota system and federal character principle were adopted by the Federal Government (Obielumani, 2008).

Since the application of these principles to university admission process (particularly public universities), appointment of university dons, and even, locating university facilities, Obielumani (2008) identifies serious academic imbalance in the system, resulting in the deprivation of university education to qualified candidates, in certain cases, the appointment of unqualified persons to leadership positions in the universities; the under-utilization and over-utilization of university facilities, respectively. Consolidating this claim is the report of the Somade Committee of 1970 (cited by Nduka, 1974), tasked to investigate the extent of the imbalance in the Nigerian educational system. The report reveals a wide gap between the North and South, which Obielumani (2008) argued to be as a result of the different history and religious experiences both regions had before independence.

5.1   Quota System and University Education in Nigeria

The colonial Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 introduced Nigeria to federalism which created a huge development gap between the Northern and Southern regions. This, however, necessitated the adoption of a quota system in 1958. The quota system was aimed at facilitating equal representation of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria's public service (Anyanwu, 2010: 5; Tonwe and Oghator, 2009: 235; cited in Gberevbie and Ibietan, 2013: 47).

The clamour for the adoption of a quota system in admission process of students in Nigerian universities, which was expected to close up the educational gap between the regions, could be traced to the 1950s, when Northerners solicited for a system that would help their indigenes secure admissions into the University College, Ibadan. But this solicitation was quickly rejected by the British colonial masters, who insisted on academic merit as a major criterion. At independence, this position of merit over quota in the education sector was maintained and was included in the 1962 Federal Government white paper on the Ashby Commission report (Anyanwu, 2010: 10-11).

This had further widened the gap and had fuelled distrust, suspicion, fear and conflict, until it spread like wild fire and consumed the entire structure of the Nigerian State in a civil war in 1969 (Anyanwu, 2010: 5). After the Civil War, Gen. Yakubu Gowon's regime began to take decisive steps to forge national unity by closing the gap in university education. Revelations by the then Federal Commissioner of Education, Chief A.Y. Eke, indicated the extent of imbalance in the system: "… for every student in a post-secondary institution in the North there are six in the South" (cited by Anyanwu, 2010: 5). Also, the statistics of undergraduate enrolment into the then six universities in existence (one university in the North, while the remaining five in the south) by the National Universities Commission reported that "out of 14,468 students enrolled in all the universities in 1970, students from the South, constituted more than 75.6 per cent of the total population" (Anyanwu, 2010: 5).

However, in a bid to closing this gap, and to address the backlog of university applications due to the disruption of education caused by the Civil War, Gowon implored the universities to assume a national outlook in their admission policies, and recommended a massive expansion of the institutions, in size and in number (Ibadan, 1970: 16-17). Furthermore, flagging off of the Second National Development Plan (NDP) in 1970 reflects Gowon's awareness of the pivot of university education on national development. According to Anyanwu (2010):

The Second NDP not only sought to restore facilities and services damaged or disrupted by the civil war, it also desired to develop and expand education at various levels in order to attain higher enrollment ratios while at the same time reducing the educational gap in the country (p. 7).

Expressing distrust and dissatisfaction toward government, Northern leaders continued to push for an approval that will allow states establish their own universities and also the use of quota system in admission process. However, this push has been condemned by many, arguing that it will render government's attempts for peace and unity of the country futile.

But being concerned about the ability of Northern states to ensure sustainable academic quality and stable financial commitment to the proposed universities, Gen. Yakubu Gowon expressed his opposition by amending the constitution in 1972 to relocate higher education to the exclusive list from the concurrent list. By this, sole right was given to the federal government to establish universities and to legislate over all it matters (Anyanwu, 2010).

As university admission got more cumbersome due to increase in population, among others, and the attempt to bridge the educational gap between the regions, the Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo led Federal Government established the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (Jamb) and the School of Preliminary Studies in April 1977. The former was to determine matriculation requirements into the first degree programmes of all Nigerian universities, conduct a joint matriculation examination to test candidates into these universities, and determine suitable placing of qualified candidates within the universities, while the latter was to specifically assist Northern students gain access into northern universities (Adamu, n.d.).

By 1979, northern students staged a violent protest which caused the short down of all northern universities after the government abolished the School of Preliminary Studies for admissions to be solely determined by JAMB. The northern students accused the Federal Government and the south of conspiring against them, and attempting to maintain the obvious gap between the regions (Adamu, n.d.). To resolve the crisis and to finally bridge the gap between them educationally, government introduced the long expected quota system into Nigeria's university system (Adamu, n.d.). This quota system provides a formula for admission into federal universities: "merit 40 percent, states quota 30 per cent, catchment zone 20 per cent and discretion 10 per cent" (Nwagwu, 1997: 92; Adamu, n.d.).

5.2   Federal Character and University Education in Nigeria

Shortly before Gen Olusegun Obasanjo handed the affairs of government over to a civilian elected president in 1979, he drafted a new constitution where the principle of federal character was introduced. This was designed to consolidate the gains of quota system (Ekeh, 1989: 19). Ekeh (1989: 38) explains that the "federal character principle sought to give opportunities in education and employment, usually at the point of entry, to disadvantaged groups and areas to enable them compete and catch up with more advanced areas and sectors of the nation" (cited in Gberevbie and Ibietan, 2013: 47).

Though scholars like Ekundayo and Adedokun (2009: 64) have confused quota system to be the same as federal character principle, others like Eke (1989) and Gberevbie and Ibietan (2013: 47) have attempted to draw a difference between them. To Ekeh (1989: 38), federal character do not just create opportunities for disadvantaged states or region like the quota system, it goes steps further to provide soft landings for them. That is, it relaxes the criteria for disadvantaged groups. The Federal Character Commission (FRN, 1996; cited in Okoroma, 2008: 9) describes it as "lowering of entry and promotion qualifications". Gberevbie and Ibietan (2013: 47) elucidated more that "federal character principle in a legal weapon put in place to regulate appointments, promotions, security of tenure and severance in every government department". Also, Okoroma (2008) documented that federal character means: that public authorities, semi-government agencies, institutions of learning and even the private sector should ensure fair and effective representation of states or local government in areas or ethnic groups in positions of power, authority, placement in enrollment in schools and so on (p. 9).

Gboyega (1989: 166) makes it a lot more direct, without mincing words. He states; "special consideration should be given to candidates from the Northern provinces and other areas where educational facilities were more backward than elsewhere".

Therefore, we can construe that though quota system and federal character seem alike; the latter covers wider scope than the former. To consolidate this claim is the address of Prof. Shuaibu Oba Adbulraheen, documented by Okoli (2012) and Nnabugwu (2012), to the university administrators during a workshop organised by the Federal Character Commission (FCC). He urged them to observe

the federal character principles in staff recruitment and appointments at both the management and senior officers' levels at their universities. The Commission expounds the purpose of the principle as to "ensure a strong, virile and indivisible nation based on fairness, equity, justice with a view to promoting national loyalty and fostering a sense of belonging among all Nigerians" (Okoli, 2012).

6   IMPACT OF ETHNICIZATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

From inception, the adoption of the federal character principle and quota system have generated mixed feelings as observed by Obielumani (2008), the supporters of these policies see them as a framework to enhance increased access to education for the "disadvantaged" states in the country, while the opponents of these policies perceive them as a fraud designed to stagnate the educational movements of the educationally "advantaged" states.

To their credit, however, these policies have largely addressed the matter of educational imbalance, at least, in terms of facilities within the Nigerian state. This imbalance was noted by the Northern States Chamber of commerce and Industry (1999; cited in Obielumani 2008) in a conference, where it was stated that: "there are fears that unless the Federal Government declares a state of emergency in education in the North, attempts to solve the imbalance, will remain futile". To this extent, therefore, these intervention policies have been responsible for the massive establishment of universities in the north. In 1999, only 10 public universities (all 10 were federal universities) were located in the Northern region, unlike the south that possessed 26 universities (15 federal and 11 states). Today, the northern region boasts of an additional 25 public universities (10 federal universities and 15 state universities) with 12 of them established between 2011 and 2013.

On the other hand, these policies have also placed the university education system in a quagmire. One of the major repercussions of the ethnicization of the university education is that it paved the way for mediocrity over merit and hard work. The implementation of quota system has watered down the public university admission process as admission is no longer given on the basis of performance. The quota system stipulates that only 40% of admissions should be based on merit. This implies that a staggering 60% of admission slots are based on other factors such as state of origin, catchment areas and discretion. Students admitted based on the catchment area and discretionary quota; usually don't meet the basic requisites for admission. This policy further creates room for the admission of intellectually deficient candidates ultimately resulting in the reduction of educational standards (Okoroma, 2008).

Consequently, the implication of this quota system is that a huge percentage of students in Nigerian public universities are not qualified to be there while those that are qualified are not given admission, thereby calling into question the quality of graduates that these universities release into the society. The quota system, therefore leads to the denial of many brilliant candidate's admission, while weak ones are given (Nwagwu, 1997). The result of this is the creation of a frustrated class of brilliant students who have lost faith in the system and have now turned to the private institutions or opted to further their education abroad, ultimately depriving the Nigerian state of intellectually sharp minds.

It is also pertinent to note that these policies have promoted discrimination, disunity, favouritism and corruption. This means that when quality is no longer the criterion for selection, the system becomes exposed to fraudulent practices. As Nwagwu (1997) noted:

Arising from a down-grading of merit as a basis for admission, there is much racketeering during the exercise. Bribery, corruption and nepotism become agents that ensure admission of weak candidates and, at times, even of the bright ones who have lost faith in merit, fair play and justice. As a result of this situation, mediocrity and economic power take precedence over academic standards (p. 92).

Similarly, the federal character principle has created serious challenges at the staffing and administrative level of universities. A number of scholars have recognized this fact. Forrest (1993; cited in Gberevbie and Ibietan, 2013: 55) argued that the implementation of the principle of federal character in the public service "not only led to poor appointments but also enhanced mediocrity rather than merit". Alao (2009: 149) argued that the principle promotes mediocrity at the expense of merit, particularly with the abuse that characterizes its application in civil service appointment and promotion (cited in Adeosun, 2011: 10). In the same vein, this situation is actually quite glaring to the extent that today certain positions must be reserved for the indigenes of the universities' host communities. Where that is not the case, the process of institutional administration becomes extremely difficult leading to administrative ineffectiveness. In the event that there are no qualified persons to fill in these vacancies, controversial promotions are then given to unqualified personnel. This point gives credence

to Gberevbie & Ibietan (2013: 56) who noted that "the principle and its application have brought about the unintended effect of creating situations of 'elimination by substitution' which makes it counter-productive. This it does through discrimination in appointment and promotion".

Indeed with such flawed admission and staffing processes, it becomes problematic for universities, as centres of excellence to set the pace for the large society in the efficient and effective management of human and material resources (Okoroma, 2008: 5).

7   CONCLUSION

It is very obvious that the inter-ethnic strives and competition in Nigeria and the response of the government to the ethnic question has not augured well for the development of the country. The fact is that these policies designed to accommodate the diverse groups and the manner in which they have been applied in Nigeria, has further divided the country rather than uniting it.

Those issues that alienate the masses from the state and create the environment of discord among the various peoples upon which certain elite could use to instigate a rebellion against the state must be eliminated. Most of these issues revolve around citizenship rights, access to power and economic resources and representation. Discriminatory policies that emphasise differences in Nigeria such as the state of origin clause as a basis for transaction with federal and state governments should be eliminated because it has failed to create a sense of belonging.

In a knowledge driven world of 21st century, Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind with these retrogressive policies and attitude that have stalled development. The leadership, at all levels of government in the country, must embrace a new vision of 'One Nigeria' and begin to inculcate such values into the greater society.

The policies of quota system and federal character can no longer be sustained and should be replaced with competition and merit as the sole determinant in the consideration for admission, appointments and promotion. Only then can the foundation for the take-off of the country is laid to become an industrialized society capable of creating more wealth that can percolate down the huge population of the country.

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